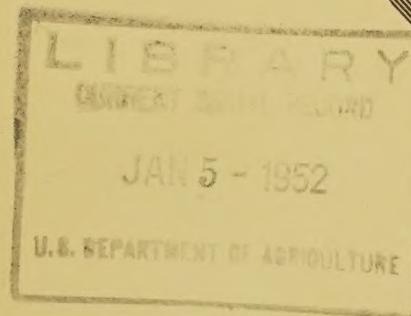


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CO-OP ELECTRIFICATION ADVISER TRAINING OUTLINE

109

ANNUAL MEETINGS



REA

RURAL ELECTRIFICATION ADMINISTRATION

U.S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

10-⁵¹

Purposes of this Outline

This is one of a series of outlines prepared by REA as an aid in planning and arranging training schools for co-op electrification advisers. Each outline deals with a power use subject or with some aspect of cooperative principles and practice or with a particular method or technique of getting information to people. These are the three principal fields in which electrification advisers need to be skilled. It is suggested that committees planning such training schools keep in mind the need of training in all three types of subject matter and, insofar as practicable, make use of the outlines in a balanced combination. In most cases, two or three subjects can be covered in a five-day school. This booklet contains both suggested subject matter and suggestions as to how the material might be presented with a suitable time schedule indicated. The booklet is thus useful as a guide to committees in charge of setting up training schools, as an aid to the instructors, and as a subject matter manual that may be distributed to participants as a reminder and reference to the material studied at the school.

A list of titles of current outlines completed and of those in preparation may be obtained from any REA fieldman of the Applications and Loans Division or by writing to Applications and Loans Division, Rural Electrification Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D. C.

Suggested Program and Procedure

ANNUAL MEETINGS

Your co-op's annual meeting is the only time during the entire year that many members have direct contact with the organization which brought electricity into their homes.

Because of its unique importance the annual meeting requires the most careful planning and an all-out effort by the Board and the entire staff of the co-op.

To get the members out to the annual meeting, and then to hold their interest when they get there--these are the two problems.

Suggested Procedure. The following outline shows how this subject might be presented in a one-day program at a co-op electrification adviser training school. The topics would be developed largely through group discussion after brief presentations by persons expert in the various subjects. The outline suggests several devices for stimulating discussion.

Discussion Leader. The day's discussion leader is important to the successful development of this subject. He should be generally familiar not only with co-ops but also with the REA program. He should have had experience in stimulating and guiding group discussions. Someone who has the required training and has shown special interest in member education is a good possibility. If you have difficulty in locating a suitable person, REA may be able to help you find someone to serve as leader.

Program Chairman. The person selected to serve as general chairman for your entire training school or for this particular day's program will be of great help to the discussion leader, particularly if your chairman is an old-timer in the co-op movement.

The chairman can set the tone of the sessions by pointing out in his opening remarks that the participants are brought together not just for the purpose of exchanging ideas but for a training program intended to help them do their job more effectively.

Subject Matter Outline. Although the subject matter should be developed largely by the group, it is desirable for the leader, as well as the program speakers, to have a prepared subject matter outline as a guide, so as to make sure that no major points are overlooked in the discussion. Such an outline follows this suggested program outline. While this outline was prepared specifically to help electrification advisers in the assignments they will be given in planning the annual meeting, it contains a great deal of suggested subject material which goes beyond their needs. The outline may be, therefore, a useful reference for the manager, directors and other co-op leaders. Extra copies of the subject matter outline for all participants in this school can be supplied by REA. In general, it is found that the participants contribute more to the discussion and get more out of the meeting if the subject matter outline is mailed to them some days in advance of the meeting.

Suggested Program and Procedure (Cont.)

ANNUAL MEETINGS

Morning Session

<u>Time</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Speaker or Leader</u>
9:00	Opening Remarks: Statement of purpose of session and introduction of participants. It should be made clear that the use of this subject at a school for electrification advisers does not in any way minimize the realization that planning the annual meeting is a primary responsibility of the Board.	Chairman.
9:15	Talk: <u>"Why Hold an Annual Meeting?"</u> Audience participation is useful at the outset on this topic. The Discussion Leader can ask for reasons why annual meetings are useful.	Discussion Leader for the day.
9:30	Group Discussion: <u>"What Makes a Good Annual Meeting?"</u> The various factors can be listed on a blackboard as volunteered by participants.	Discussion Leader for the day.
10:00	Talk: <u>"How To Plan a Successful Meeting."</u>	President or Manager of an REA co-op which has put on unusually good meetings, or an REA representative, or a Statewide leader experienced in planning annual meetings.
10:30	Recess.	
10:45	Panel Discussion: <u>"Getting Out the Members."</u> The Discussion Leader should indicate what electrification advisers can do to help secure good attendance. He should have with him examples of notices, programs, publicity, etc., to pass around for comment during the discussion.	Discussion Leader as moderator; Director (secretary of board) to discuss "notice;" Statewide publicity director, or REA information specialist, or friendly newspaper or radio man to discuss "advance publicity;" member handpicked to discuss "best features of meeting."
11:30	Talk: <u>"Things that Help."</u>	
12:00	Recess for lunch.	

Suggested Program and Procedure (Cont.)

Afternoon Session

<u>Time</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Speaker or Leader</u>
1:30	<u>Work Session: "Scenic Valley Electric Co-op -- Planning the Meeting."</u> During this Work Session participants accept roles as members of a co-op's planning committee for the annual membership meeting. One should be designated as the manager, another as the electrification adviser. Up to nine can function as directors, including one to act as chairman of the board and of the planning committee. Additional participants can be assigned parts as assistant manager, another electrification adviser, chairmen and members of such co-op committees as member education, publicity, attendance, entertainment, refreshments, etc. The assignment for this Work Session is to plan the best possible annual meeting, in as much detail as time permits. Program and entertainment will be agreed upon by the board, and a time and place set in accordance with the bylaws. Instructions to the manager as to what he and the electrification adviser are responsible for would have to be issued. An operating statement as well as reports by the manager and president and perhaps by committee chairmen would be prepared. A schedule for publicity, mailings to the members, and other arrangements should be agreed upon. Sample notice, newspaper and radio publicity, etc., should be written.	REA specialist, official from Statewide, or someone with a reputation for putting on exceptionally good co-op meetings.
2:30	Recess.	
2:45	<u>Work Session: "Scenic Valley Electric Co-op -- Holding the Meeting."</u> For this Work Session participants can assume new roles, providing the essential personnel for a practice meeting; chairman, secretary, manager, registration clerk, electrification adviser, visiting speaker, and members.	REA specialist, official from Statewide, or someone with a reputation for putting on exceptionally good co-op meetings.

Suggested Program and Procedure (Cont.)

<u>Time</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Speaker or Leader</u>
	All regular features of an annual meeting should be enacted -- registering members, welcoming speaker, calling meeting to order, announcing quorum, disposing of minutes, reports, elections, new business, etc. The aim should be a model meeting in miniature. If carefully planned and well-executed this Work Session should be fun as well as instructive for all participants.	
4:15	Group Discussion: <u>"After the Meeting."</u>	Discussion Leader for the day.
4:45	Summary and Conclusion.	Chairman.
5:00	Adjourn.	

END OF PROGRAM. SUGGESTED SUBJECT MATTER OUTLINE FOLLOWS.

Suggested Subject Matter

ANNUAL MEETINGS

The following specific subject matter suggestions are intended as a check list to aid the chairman, discussion leaders, and speakers in preparing their material for the program, and should also be found useful by participants.

Topic I. "Why Hold an Annual Meeting?"

A. Business reasons.

1. "Required by law" is the most glib and obvious reason, but this reply ignores the values which the members, management, and the co-op itself as an organization can gain in annual meetings.
2. To elect directors.
3. To hear and consider reports by the manager and officers of the board covering the co-op's operation during the preceding year.
4. To amend bylaws when necessary. (Bylaws should be kept current.)
5. To extend loan limits when necessary.
6. To consider capital credits.
7. To elect representatives to power generating co-ops or to Statewide organizations.
8. To transact any other business that requires decision by the owners and to make any other decisions for guiding the board and manager.
9. To make management easier. The annual meeting is just about the only occasion when management can meet members face to face to discuss with them progress and problems of the co-op.

B. Educational reasons.

1. Although the annual meeting is no substitute for a schedule of member education activities carried on all through the year, it is a principal feature of that schedule.
2. To exchange ideas and answer members' questions.

Suggested Subject Matter (Cont.)

3. To bring members in contact with their responsibilities. Attendance is in itself a recognition of these responsibilities.
4. To acquaint members with new and additional uses of electricity and to inform members about safety precautions and maintenance of equipment and appliances.
5. To give members an opportunity to discuss cooperative principles and practice.
6. To develop in members the pride of ownership which assures whole-hearted member support.
7. To emphasize the important relation between the co-op and the community.

C. Recreational reasons.

1. To bring members together, so that old friendships can be renewed and new acquaintanceships can be made.
2. To provide an outstanding event through such features as speakers, exhibits, music and other entertainment, prizes and refreshments.

D. Reasons of democracy.

1. The annual meeting -- with its requirements of membership participation, of responsibility for directors to report on how well they have administered the trust given them, and of equal voice and vote in electing directors and in determining general policy -- is the embodiment of democracy.
2. The annual meeting serves as a training ground for democracy and in this way serves the community and the Nation.

Topic II. "What Makes a Good Annual Meeting?"

A. Representative attendance with at least a quorum of members present.

1. Large attendance reflects member interest and is one indication of a healthy co-op.
2. Are members coming from all parts of the service area or just from the neighborhood in which the meeting is held? How effective is your meeting in bringing members from the far corners?
3. In case a quorum is not reached, all possible features of the meeting, such as reports, discussion, and entertainment,

Suggested Subject Matter (Cont.)

should be held as scheduled. While no final actions can be taken at a meeting lacking a quorum, the chairman can nevertheless ask for an advisory vote for the board's information on any matter of concern to the members present.

- B. Clear, concise reports, printed or mimeographed.
 - 1. Mail abbreviated reports to members with notice of meeting.
 - 2. Distribute detailed reports to members as they assemble.
 - 3. Stress highlights orally.
- C. A choice of candidates in elections.
 - 1. Prepared ballots should have blank spaces for candidates nominated from the floor.
 - 2. Prospect of a contest stimulates attendance.
- D. Adequate floor discussion.
 - 1. Sufficient time should be allotted.
 - 2. Chairman should see that discussion remains pertinent, concise, and clear.
- E. Exhibits, displays, and demonstrations to aid members' understanding of the co-op's operations and current condition.
 - 1. Useful in imparting information which will help members appreciate the problems and achievements of their co-op.
 - 2. They help create "atmosphere" by dressing up an otherwise bare meeting place.
- F. Well-prepared program with a balance of business and entertainment.
 - 1. Some come for the business; others for entertainment. A carefully selected combination of both offers enough variety to appeal to all members.
- G. An atmosphere of fairness, maturity, democracy, and membership control.
 - 1. Nothing discourages attendance quicker than a conviction by members that the meeting is all "rigged" beforehand, that elections are "fixed," that reports are "railroaded" through, and that member attendance is of no point or consequence.

Suggested Subject Matter (Cont.)

H. Smooth progress of the meeting, evidencing careful preparation of all phases and good chairmanship.

1. Think of meetings you have attended -- which ones did you prefer: those which began late, dragged along through tiresome speakers and many delays? or those which began on time and moved along briskly to an early closing?

I. An adequate meeting place.

1. Too large a room, with many vacant seats, is depressing; too small a room, with insufficient seating, produces disgruntled members.
2. Poor ventilation, bad lighting, faulty acoustics, inadequate seating all help to spoil a meeting and to discourage attendance at future meetings.
3. A good location, attractive and helpful signs, clean rest rooms -- these give the meeting "tone" and make members proud of their co-op.

J. Rapid registration.

1. Registration is an important first impression. Make it a good impression that will not sour the rest of the meeting.

Did your last annual meeting include all of these features?
What about next year?

Topic III. "How To Plan a Successful Meeting."

A. Who does the planning?

1. The Board is responsible.
2. The Manager may have to execute much of the planning and preparations.
3. The Electrification Adviser's tasks will vary from one co-op to another, but in most co-ops the Electrification Adviser is called upon to handle publicity, arrange the program of entertainment, prepare special features, and make physical arrangements for the meeting. Sometimes the Electrification Adviser is asked to contribute ideas which will be useful in planning a successful meeting.

Suggested Subject Matter (Cont.)

B. Aim at two targets:

1. Get the members to the meeting;
2. Make the meeting worth while for those who do attend.

C. There is no magic formula for planning successful meetings, but a few essential suggestions may be listed.

1. Start planning early.

a. Planning for next year's meeting should begin with a "post mortem" session held immediately after this year's meeting.

b. If possible, attend annual meetings of other organizations in your part of the State, to note ideas you can use in planning your own meeting.

c. Three months in advance of the meeting date is about right for the first announcements and for the preparation of program and arrangements.

2. Use committees of members to relieve the pressure of extra work on employees and to create more widespread interest in the annual meeting.

a. Attendance committee, made up of a corps of dependable members under chairmanship of a director, to telephone or visit lists of neighbors a few days before the meeting and to arrange transportation where needed.

b. Food committee, headed by a director, to plan for whatever eating arrangements are desired.

c. Welcoming committee, headed by a director, to act as ushers and guides near the registration tables, and to greet invited guests.

d. Decorations committee, headed by a director, to see that decorations and displays agreed upon in advance are prepared and put into place.

e. Publicity committee, to get stories into local newspapers, announcement of the meeting on local radio programs, and posters made and distributed.

3. Date, time, and length of meeting.

a. The meeting must be held, if possible, on the date specified in the bylaws. If it is not held as specified, the board should call a special meeting for a later date to take the place of the annual

Suggested Subject Matter (Cont.)

meeting. If experience shows that the specified date comes at the wrong time of year for good attendance, the bylaws should be amended to a more suitable date.

- b. If the meeting date and time are flexible, try to avoid conflicting with other scheduled events. This is important for preservation of good community relations.
- c. There is an increasing tendency for meetings to be too long. This is of special importance if members bring along their children to the meetings. Two hours is probably the maximum period that people can be expected to sit for a meeting without an intermission. Many co-ops start about 10:30, have a break for lunch, and finish in the early afternoon.

4. Place.

- a. Arrange far enough in advance to be sure of obtaining the meeting hall you want at the place specified in the bylaws.
- b. Considerations in selecting a meeting hall:
 - (1) Big enough; seats enough?
 - (2) Centrally located; easy to find?
 - (3) Convenient for extra features such as movies, public address system, dealers' displays, co-op posters, refreshments, etc.?
 - (4) Health and safety -- clean rest rooms? Convenient drinking fountains? adequate fire escapes? Plenty of parking space?

5. Program of business.

- a. Business is of first importance. It is the reason for holding the meeting.
- b. Reports. Who will present the reports? Will copies be mailed to members in advance of the meeting? What techniques will be used to make the financial report understandable?
- c. Elections. The Board has responsibility for seeing that all arrangements for elections are completed in accordance with provisions of the bylaws. In many co-ops the manager or electrification adviser is asked to make sure that ballot boxes are provided, and that a sufficient number of ballots are printed, at the direction of the Board. Bylaws of nearly all

Suggested Subject Matter (Cont.)

co-ops provide for nominations from the floor, and in these cases ballots must have extra space for such nominations.

Some co-ops make it a practice to publish brief biographical notes about each candidate whose name is on the printed ballot. This information can be in the newsletter or in the printed program or on a separate sheet handed out at the meeting.

Sample candidate sketch:

ABRAHAM GREGOR, farmer, Watts County. Helped sign up members and get right-of-way easements for the Co-op's D-section. Raises chickens and peaches on his 212 acres, and used an average of more than 400 kwh per month last year. Member of Tri-State Cooperative Poultry Association, Watts County School Board, Farm Bureau.

- d. Amendments to bylaws. If there are proposed changes to the co-op's bylaws to be put before the members for a vote at the annual meeting, the Board will probably check all aspects of the proposed action with their attorney and then direct the manager to have proper and legal notification prepared and mailed to all members. The electrification adviser may be called upon to help prepare and mail this information.

The intent of the proposed change should be explained simply and carefully.

Time will need to be set aside in the agenda of the annual meeting to allow for explanation and discussion of bylaws changes.

- e. Other business. Annual meetings should not be cluttered with a lot of trivial matters which must be discussed and voted; however, some of the most successful co-ops are those in which the Board makes sure that all really important matters of fundamental policy are presented to the membership for decision.

It is the members, after all, who make up a cooperative; and only by relying upon the members in all important matters can Board and management be assured of continuing loyalty and support.

6. Program of entertainment.

- a. Have enough entertainment and special features scheduled to make the meeting worth attending for that alone.

Suggested Subject Matter (Cont.)

- b. Some co-ops try mixing some of the fun events into the serious part of the meeting in order to hold the interest of members. This works well for business meetings which are long and for those in which many children are present. Several co-ops show free movies for children in a nearby room during the business meeting, so parents can concentrate undisturbed.
- c. Don't have too much of one thing. Keep good balance in your program of entertainment. An audience likes movies, but seldom wants to sit through an hour of them at an annual meeting. Group singing is fun, but stop before the members have a chance to get tired of it.
- d. An interesting talk by a good speaker is a feature of nearly all co-op annual meetings. Two 10-minute speeches are often better than one 20-minute speech, but there should be a very strict limit on the number of speeches, and on the total time consumed.

The subject should be pertinent to cooperation, rural electrification or telephone service, or to the interests of the local rural area. A lecture on "Travel in the Philippines" might be interesting to hear but has no valid place at a rural electric co-op annual meeting.

Partisan political speeches are out of keeping with basic cooperative principles.

- e. Special events which various co-ops find useful and include in planning annual meetings:

Contests of all kinds, movies, prizes, eats, quiz programs, music, vaudeville acts, clowns, carnival rides, demonstrations, exhibits. These will be discussed in more detail under the next topic.

- f. Good home talent is usually preferred to expensive paid entertainers.

D. Plan a balanced meeting.

- 1. Some serious business and some fun, but not a hodge-podge. How about a special theme each year, carried out in the decorations, exhibits, and program? A tenth or twelfth anniversary of the co-op is a "natural." Other possibilities: More production, Youth and Tomorrow's Co-op, Understanding Capital Credits, Running Water on the Farm.

Suggested Subject Matter (Cont.)

2. Don't make the meeting so short that members feel they have travelled too far for too little.
3. Don't pack so much into the meeting that it is too long for members who must sit on hard seats and have chores waiting at home.

Topic IV. "Getting out the Members."

A successful meeting one year helps bring out those same members another year and makes other members want to come.

A. Official notice.

1. Sincere efforts to bring members to the meeting requires something more than a drab mimeograph notice. Compare the two following samples:
 - a. Sample of poor notice:

BLANK COUNTY ELECTRIC MEMBERSHIP ASSOCIATION
Anytown, Rhode Island

R.E.A.

NOTICE TO ALL STOCKHOLDERS

In accordance with the articles of Incorporation and by-laws of the Blank County Electric Membership Association, the annual meeting of members of the above corporation will be held in the Courthouse, City of Anytown, State of Rhode Island, at 8 p.m. June 3, 1951 to take action on:

1. Reports of Officers
2. Election of nine directors
3. Such other business as may properly come before the meeting or any adjournment thereof.

Dated May 28, 1951

John Edwards
Secretary

N.B. Nominations for directors are posted in the office of the corporation as specified in the By-laws.

Suggested Subject Matter (Cont.)

b. Sample of better notice:

BLANK COUNTY ELECTRIC MEMBERSHIP ASSOCIATION

MEMBER
OWNED

ANYTOWN, RHODE ISLAND

MEMBER
CONTROLLED

Dear Member:

On June 3 -- mark it on your calendar -- you have a date with your fellow-members to look after your co-op business. This is your official notice of the annual members' meeting. The place: the Community Hall at Anytown. The time: 8 p.m.

You and your family will like the program this year. It won't be all business. There will be entertainment by radio stars from Station RSVP, an exhibit of the latest electrical equipment, a short talk by John Doe of State College, a number of valuable attendance prizes contributed by local merchants, and free coffee and cake for those who can stay for a few minutes after the meeting to visit with their neighbors.

Of course, as a co-owner of this co-op enterprise you will want to hear the reports of your officers and manager. There will be time for questions and discussion on these reports and on the financial statement which will be distributed at the meeting.

Members will elect nine directors to look after their co-op business this coming year. As you can see from the enclosed ballot, more than nine candidates have already been nominated. Since you may not know all candidates, some information about each is also enclosed. Additional nominations may be made at the meeting. Voting will be by secret ballot. So come and make your vote count for the candidates of your choice.

Action is to be taken also by the members to amend the bylaws. A copy of the proposed changes is attached and forms a part of this notice. In the opinion of the board, these amendments will make for better cooperative functioning. The Capital Credits amendment will assure that every patron gets full credit for any payments he makes which are in excess of the cost of service to him. It is explained more fully in the enclosed leaflet.

Any other matters for the good of the co-op may be brought up at the meeting. Remember that this is your meeting. Your co-op will continue to be what you, the members, make it.

Cooperatively yours,

John Edwards
John Edwards
Secretary

Suggested Subject Matter (Cont.)

2. The official notice can be interesting and personalized. (see example "b." above). It can also be attractive. Here are some ways to dress up the notice so that members will pull it out of the daily accumulation of mail, read it, and remember it when the day of the annual meeting rolls around:
 - a. Use a paper of different color or texture to make it stand out.
 - b. Whether the notice is mimeographed, offset, or printed, the type face used should stand out clearly and be easy to read.
 - c. Drawings or pictures attract attention, tell the story, and hold interest.
 - d. Language should be simple, not lawyer's jargon.
3. The announced program must sound interesting. Compare the two samples below:
 - a. Sample of poor program:

PROGRAM

1:00 Register
1:30 Reports
2:00 Speaker
2:30 Election of directors
2:45 Other business
3:00 Adjourn

There will be door prizes --Be sure to come.

- b. Sample of better program:
(on next page)

A PROGRAM TO PLEASE YOU



ADAMS COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIC CO-OP

Annual Meeting, September 24
Dusserton Community Building

Morning

- 10:00 Registration (3 tables this year -- no waiting in line).
Special prizes to first 100 registrants.
18 booths of exhibits and displays of electric motors, appliances
and new ways to use your co-op "wired hand."
Music by the High School Band
- 11:00 Opening of the Annual Meeting by your president, Bill Campbell.
Welcome by Mayor A. B. Smith.
4-H Club Act -- Accordion Trio.
"Can Your Wiring Do Its Job?" -- Demonstration by Mary Carson, your
electrification adviser.
- 12:00 Bring your own picnic lunch. Plenty of table space under the trees
in the park across the street from the Community Hall. Your co-op
will furnish the coffee and cold drinks.

Afternoon (Business meeting for all members)

- 1:00 Drawing for Home Freezer (you have to be in the Community Building
to win).
Reading of minutes of last annual meeting by Ralph Roberts,
your secretary.
"Here Is the Financial Picture," a report by Joe Swansen,
your treasurer.
"Your Co-op Is in Good Shape," a report by your manager,
"Pappy" G. R. Krinkle.
Report of Nominations Committee (see sample ballot attached -- you
can make additional nominations from the floor).
Election of four directors to the Board.
Consideration of Capital Credits, and amendments to the bylaws for
adoption of Capital Credits.
~~Other business proposals or questions which members want to present.~~

Suggested Subject Matter (Cont.)

B. Advance publicity.

1. REA has prepared for your co-op a folder of Annual Meeting Aids, which contains model news stories for community papers, radio announcements, posters, and stories and drawings which can be used in the newsletter for members. Write to REA for a folder of this material free of charge.
2. A selection of several mats for printing annual meeting posters can be obtained from REA.
3. Your advance publicity will start away ahead of the official notice -- two or perhaps three months before the date of the annual meeting.
 - a. A story in the co-op newsletter announcing some special issue or feature, together with meeting date and place.
 - b. A similar story in the area's community newspapers, but with background information added.
 - c. Cartoon or announcement on billing card if separate billing card is used.
4. Repetition is one of the sound principles of advertising. Announce your meeting over and over again on a planned schedule. Add more new details to each successive announcement.
5. Use radio spot announcements in areas where members listen regularly to certain stations.
6. Pre-meeting publicity can be obtained in the co-op's newsletter (and Statewide publication) and community newspapers from articles on such related subjects as:
 - a. Nomination of directors;
 - b. Discussion of proposed amendments to the bylaws;
 - c. Benefits and responsibilities of member ownership;
 - d. Highlights from previous meetings or from the history of the co-op.
7. Pictures from last year's meeting can be used effectively not only in newsletter stories, but also in making up a display poster or exhibit about the coming annual meeting. This is effective publicity for the co-op office, used near the doorway or in a conspicuous window.

Suggested Subject Matter (Cont.)

8. A contest or an outstanding feature planned for the meeting offers opportunity for extra pre-meeting publicity.
 9. As the day for the meeting approaches, placards, banners, and displays should be placed at key points throughout the service area.
 10. During the last several days attendance can be boosted by a committee of members who undertake to visit or call their neighbors by telephone.
- C. What features have proved effective in bringing out members?
1. A speaker whom they want to hear.
 2. Music.
 - a. School band or chorus;
 - b. Boy Scout drum and bugle corps;
 - c. Church vocalists or choral groups;
 - d. Outstanding instrument players from among the members' families.
 3. Group singing (well-known favorites, with a good leader).
 4. Movies (send to Information Services Division, REA, for leaflet Motion Pictures for REA Co-ops). Many co-ops show half an hour of movies during the registration period, before the official opening of the meeting. Some show movies after the official business for those who are not in a hurry to get home.
 5. Demonstrations of adequate wiring, safety with electricity, new uses for electricity, care and maintenance of electric equipment and appliances.
 6. Exhibits of electric appliances, equipment, and motors; model wiring layouts; posters showing various phases of the co-op's operations and status.
 7. Vaudeville acts, such as a magician, juggler, chalk-talk illustrator, or clown.
 8. Panel discussions about the co-op's policies, progress, and problems, or about plans for rural telephones.

Suggested Subject Matter (Cont.)

9. Contests:

- a. Co-op quiz (send to Information Services Division, REA, for A Co-op Quiz for Your 1951 Annual Meeting);
- b. Demonstrations of new uses of co-op electricity (especially good for competition among young people);
- c. Essays or talks on "What Electrification Means to Me" or "What Rural Electrification Has Done for _____ County";
- d. Baking contests (electric ovens);
- e. Wood-sawing contests (hand power vs. electric motor);
- f. Photo contest for best photographic portrayal of electrified farm life;
- g. Fun contests of various kinds (pie-eating, hog calling, most-beautiful-girl, etc.).

10. Prizes:

- a. For contests (see above);
- b. As special awards for oldest member present, member who came longest distance, members who have attended every annual meeting, etc.;
- c. As door prizes, by drawing winners from numbered stubs of all members present.

For best effect scatter award of prizes throughout the program with at least one at the start, to encourage prompt arrival, and major prizes at the end of the meeting, to encourage members to remain until the close of the session.

11. Eats:

- a. There are many ways to feed members at an annual meeting. Here are a few:
 - (1) Barbecue;
 - (2) Fish fry;
 - (3) Clam bake or oyster roast;
 - (4) Basket lunch picnic;

Suggested Subject Matter (Cont.)

- (5) Refreshments only (ice cream, cold drinks, hot dogs);
 - (6) Luncheon or dinner (usually prepared by local women's organizations).
- b. Feeding 500 or 1,000 people is a serious and expensive undertaking. It requires experience and careful planning. Suggestions:
- (1) Tell members in advance (via newsletter or meeting announcement) just what food will be furnished, if any, and whether it will be sold or given to members.
 - (2) If the co-op is contracting for or assigning a concession to a local organization (church society, Grange, P-T A, lodge auxiliary) to provide eats, try to rotate the selection in the interest of good community relations.
 - (3) Plans must be flexible enough to provide for disposal of surplus food in case attendance is poor or for getting more food in a hurry if attendance exceeds estimates.
 - (4) Be sure there is plenty of table space, shade, eating utensils, trash cans, drinking water.
 - (5) Don't keep members and their families waiting in long lines to get served.

12. Dance.

13. Ball game.

Topic V. "Things that Help."

- A. Real choice of candidates. At meetings where there is no choice of candidates for election of board members there is little incentive to go to the meeting and cast a vote.
- B. Have an issue for discussion and decision by the members. Even if there is no issue at stake the board can stimulate interest by presenting some matter of concern to the members for their discussion and advisory vote.
- C. Adopt a theme for the meeting to provide a basis for unity in the program and publicity. A 10th anniversary is a "natural," of course, but how about "Home owned and locally controlled," or "We pay taxes, too," or "More production with co-op power," or "A phone for your farm"?

Suggested Subject Matter (Cont.)

- D. Souvenir programs. These can be as simple or as elaborate as finances and good taste dictate, but should contain a brief story of the co-op, system statistics (preferably in charts or pictographs), financial report, manager's report, and the program schedule for the meeting.
- E. Registration. To make registration of members operate fast and smoothly takes careful preparation. These things help:
 - 1. More than one registration desk. Better have a registration desk for every 250 members you expect at the meeting. You will need two employees at each desk, with accurate list of members.
 - 2. Big, easy-to-read signs pointing to the registration desks. Signs, too, showing which desks handle which part of the alphabet, e.g. ("Names beginning with A - E").
 - 3. Numbered identity cards mailed out in advance. Member merely signs and turns in numbered stub at desk, retaining voting card with duplicate number. Extra cards have to be on hand for members who left at home the card which was mailed to them. Some co-ops issue voting buttons or identity tags to members.

F. Working with the community.

- 1. Cooperate with churches, civic clubs and other community groups in scheduling meetings of the co-op, so as to avoid major conflicts of dates.

Some co-ops make arrangements to hold their annual meeting at a time which will allow members from outlying districts to enjoy a circus or county fair or other event in the town where the annual meeting is being held. But in that case, the time of the co-op's meeting should be chosen so as not to conflict with the other event.

In several States, the electric co-ops have organized large traveling shows that tour the annual meetings with exhibits, entertainment, and all the physical equipment needed for the meeting. This is often the biggest show of the year in the county or the meeting town.

It is sometimes possible, with the help of the local chamber of commerce, to get the mayor to declare the co-op's meeting day as official "Rural Electrification Day." Merchants hang out "welcome" signs. The local paper has a special edition with extra advertisements from local merchants.

Suggested Subject Matter (Cont.)

2. Work closely with appliance dealers in your service area. Give them equal opportunity to use exhibit space available at your annual meeting. Appliance dealers are usually willing to display posters announcing the co-op's annual meeting and will sometimes donate a prize in exchange for some free advertising. Courtesy and good taste should govern the co-op's requests for such favors.
3. Strengthen community participation:
 - a. By getting the local mayor to open the meeting with a short message of welcome;
 - b. By inviting a local minister to give an invocation;
 - c. By arranging for an electrical demonstration by a local 4-H Club or FFA group.
4. Check fire regulations ahead of time to determine that the co-op's meeting will be in compliance, and that the local fire department is alerted for any emergencies accompanying so large a meeting.
5. The manager, president or some other co-op representative should have a talk with the Chief of Police of the town in which the meeting will be held, so that preparations can be made in advance to provide safeguards for the extra traffic and crowds.

G. On the meeting date.

1. Check the meeting place thoroughly:
 - a. Where are the light switches? Do the lights work? Are convenience outlets in working order for any plugged-in appliances?
 - b. Are temperature and ventilation all right?
 - c. Are there chairs enough?
 - d. Does the public address system work?
 - e. Do you have blackboard and chalk on hand?
 - f. Make sure that all signs, posters, exhibits are in place.
 - g. Make a last-minute survey of parking, registration, and eating arrangements.

Suggested Subject Matter (Cont.)

- h. Have minutes book, last audit, bylaws, etc., at hand. Does the chairman have a copy of the REA pamphlet, "Rules of Order"?
 - i. Some co-op representative should be designated to meet speakers and visitors.
 - j. Do you have someone to work with the local newspaper reporters? Will there be a photographer to take pictures? He will need someone from the co-op to help him.
- H. Chairman of the meeting.
- 1. He should keep the meeting "moving" so as to stay on schedule, but yield to the wishes of members if they want a longer meeting or more discussion on some point.
 - 2. He should set an example for fairness and democratic action in conducting the meeting.

Topic VI. "After the Meeting."

- A. Hold a "post mortem" session of directors, manager, electrification adviser, special committee chairmen from the membership, and other interested persons soon after the close of the annual meeting, to determine:
 - 1. What were the good features of the meeting, and how they can be used to advantage for the next meeting.
 - 2. What were the bad spots, and how they can be remedied at the next meeting.
 - 3. If there was not a quorum present, what was the reason:
 - a. Not enough publicity?
 - b. Bad weather?
 - c. Drab program?
 - d. No issues to decide and no choice of candidates?
 - e. Inconvenient time, date, or place?
- What specific steps can be taken now to guarantee a quorum at the next annual meeting?
- B. Try a poll of the membership to get their reaction to the annual meeting. Some co-ops use this device after each meeting to get ideas for planning next year's meeting.

Suggested Subject Matter (Cont.)

Here are some of the questions actually asked of members in such a survey:

FOR THE GOOD OF YOUR CO-OP

If you are a member, won't you please check this list and leave it in your seat or at the registration desk? Your board and your manager want your suggestions to help in planning future meetings. You do not need to sign your name.

- | | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 1. Did you like the meeting as a whole? | — | — |
| 2. Were the beginning hour and length of meeting satisfactory? | — | — |
| 3. Could you hear the speakers well? | — | — |
| 4. Did you like the officers' and manager's reports? | — | — |
| 5. Do you think the members had ample opportunity to ask questions? | — | — |
| 6. Were questions from the floor answered fully? | — | — |
| 7. Was the election conducted democratically enough to suit you? | — | — |
| 8. Do you feel you got the information to which you are entitled? | — | — |
| 9. Were the eating arrangements satisfactory? | — | — |
| 10. What part of the program did you like best? | ————— | |
| 11. What part did you like least? | ————— | |
| 12. Do you still have any question about how your co-op is run?
If so, please write it on the back of this sheet.
If possible, we will answer it in our newsletter. | | |
| 13. Please jot down any suggestions you have for improving the meeting. | ————— | |

NOTE: If your answer to any question from 1 to 9 is NO, it will be appreciated if you will explain why. Just list the number of the question on the back of this sheet and write your comment beside the number.

Selected References (available through REA)

1. Annual Meeting Issue, Rural Electrification News, REA, December 1949 - January 1950.
2. Telling the Co-op Story, Miscellaneous Publication 685, REA, 1949, pp. 23-25.
3. "Your 1951 Annual Meeting," Rural Electrification News, REA, December 1950 - January 1951.
4. "Annual Meetings--For Members Only!," Rural Georgia, March 1950.
5. Annual Meeting Aids, (sample publicity material) REA, 1950.
6. Co-op Chat: "About Annual Meetings," REA, May 9, 1947.
7. "Planning Pays in Kansas," Rural Electrification News, REA, August - September 1949.
8. "Meeting Rotation System," Rural Electrification News, REA, October - November 1948.
9. Ideas for Making Annual Meetings Effective, Farm Credit Administration, Washington, D. C., May 1951.
10. Co-op Annual Meeting Time, Consumers Cooperative Association, P. O. Box 2359, Kansas City 13, Missouri.



